



# Neighborhood Design District

Updated December 18, 2007

The Neighborhood Design District is a special overlay zoning that was developed in response to citizen concerns about the incompatible design of new construction in traditional neighborhoods. The intent of the Neighborhood Design District is to provide minimum design standards for new dwellings and additions/exterior modifications of existing dwellings to ensure compatibility with existing development.

In 1993, the Virginia General Assembly granted Roanoke the authority to establish the Neighborhood Design District in areas identified by the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority as Conservation and Rehabilitation Districts. These districts enable the Housing Authority and the City to

undertake special projects and programs that promote revitalization.

In 2002, Roanoke City Council approved Design Standards and implemented the first Neighborhood Design District in the Melrose-Rugby neighborhood. In 2005, the district was expanded to all or part of 15 additional neighborhoods surrounding Downtown as follows:

- Belmont
- Fallon
- Gainsboro
- Gilmer
- Harrison
- Hurt Park
- Kenwood
- Loudon-Melrose
- Morningside
- Mountain View
- Roundhill
- Villa Heights
- Washington Park
- West End
- Williamson Road

“The overall goal of Vision 2001-2020 is to make Roanoke an attractive place of people of all ages, backgrounds, and income levels to live, work, shop, and play. This vision requires not only sound social and economic policies but also a strong commitment to excellence in community design and appearance. Simply put, Roanoke must be a beautiful city.

Good design is not optional. The quality of the physical environment—attractive streets, buildings, parks, and open space—has a direct impact on Roanoke’s economy, the sustainability of its neighborhoods, and the successful stewardship of its unique natural and cultural resources. The community expects the highest level of excellence in building design, streetscapes, pedestrian amenities, preservation of special places, and enhancement of community distinctiveness.”

*Vision 2001-2020*  
Comprehensive Plan for Roanoke

## Design Principles

The Neighborhood Design District is regulated through an administrative process. Unlike historic districts, no board hearing is required. The Design Standards are written into the zoning ordinance, so a developer can design a new building based on the standards and expect to get approval.

The philosophy behind the Design Standards is important. Each of Roanoke's neighborhoods has varied housing styles within it. A single neighborhood can have many styles represented such as American Foursquare, Queen Anne Victorian, Cottage, and Bungalow. Rather than specify specific styles, Planning staff looked at many examples of the traditional house styles and identified what elements they tended to have in common. These design elements, not necessarily the style, are what can make a new structure compatible or incompatible. The goal was not to replicate certain styles, but to ensure that these common elements were respected. A great deal of flexibility and creativity is available within the parameters of the standards.

Following are the design elements addressed by the Design Standards:

- Building location and size
- Roof form and roof pitch
- Entrances and windows
- Siding and trim
- Porches
- Additions
- Parking

## Building Location and Size

Scale is important to compatibility. The standards establish the conditions where a two-story house is called for. If both adjoining houses are two-story, a two story infill house is required. If the stories vary on either side or if there are no houses on adjoining lots, it is the builder's choice. The Design Standards also encourage a consistent width along the street based on the average width of other structures in the block.

## Roof Form and Pitch

Residential structures in Roanoke's traditional neighborhoods almost always incorporated a complex roof form such as a hipped or intersecting. Dormers were often used to open up the roof to provide light to upper stories, but also had the effect of making the roof a design feature. The standards call for the use of some kind of complex roof form, dormers, or both.

Roof pitches in traditional neighborhoods are typically very steep compared to modern construction, frequently as steep as 12:12. The design standards set a minimum roof pitch of 6:12. Roof pitches for porches, additions, and accessory structures are not required to be as steep.

Eave and gable overhangs are important to the overall appearance of a structure. The Design Standards require minimum 12" overhangs.

## Entrances and windows

The relationship and orientation of the building to the street is important to compatibility. The standards encourage the location of a single entrance oriented to the street.

A common problem with infill development is the lack of windows. The standards have a minimum coverage for window and door openings of 15% for the front and 10% for a side that faces a street. Vertically-oriented windows are also required; that is, windows that are taller than they are wide.

Arrangement of windows and doors should be considered. The alignment, height, and width of windows and doors are important to developing a good design.

## Siding and trim

The standards prohibit the use of vertically-oriented siding such as T-111. Most other materials such as wood or vinyl siding, brick, or stucco are permitted. The standards require trim around windows and doors and at the building's corners, unless the siding material is a masonry veneer.

## Porch

The porch is an important feature of traditional neighborhoods. It has an important social function as a transition from the public realm of the street to the private realm of the home. It also establishes the building's relationship to the street. The standards require a usable front porch and set out design details for columns and railings.

## Additions

The Design Standards require that an addition be located so it is subordinate to the original building. The standards prohibit garage doors on attached garages from facing the street.

## Parking

In traditional neighborhoods, the automobile's role is de-emphasized. In most cases, required parking can and should be located on the street. On-street parking has multiple benefits: it allows more usable space on the property, it effectively narrows the street and has a traffic-calming effect, and it results in less impervious area. In addition, the developer can save money that would otherwise be spent on constructing driveways and parking areas. Where the developer chooses to locate parking on the property, it should be to the rear or side of the structure, preferably with alley access.

Two surfaced roof combined with full width porch

Vertically and horizontally aligned windows

Top and bottom rail with unexposed pickets

Porch underside enclosed between piers

4' wide sidewalk



Min. 6:12 primary roof pitch

Min. 12" eave and gable overhangs

Horizontal siding

Min. 3 1/2 inch trim (windows, doors and corner boards)

Porch roof pitch shallower than primary roof pitch

Min. 5" post with base and cap

Panel inset door with sidelight

Solid stair risers



# Review Process

Project review is administrative and must be completed within 10 days.

## Pre-development Meeting

Before applying, meet with the plan reviewer to discuss the project. The plan reviewer will discuss the plans and documents needed with the application and provide assistance to determine the design standards as they apply to your site.

## Application

Submit the completed application. There are no additional fees for work in the Neighborhood Design District. The application requires the following minimum information:

1. Site plan showing:
  - Location of the building on the lot
  - Front setbacks of adjoining structures
  - Sidewalks
  - Location of parking and driveway, if provided. Surface material specified.
  - Accessory buildings
2. Elevations of front, side and rear of the structure showing:
  - Roof pitch, roof form, and overhang widths
  - Overall dimensions of building, including the foundation height
  - Location and dimensions of windows
  - Location of entrances
  - Porch
  - Decks
3. Details of materials
  - Design of siding materials
  - Window and door trim details (width)
  - Design of porch materials - railings, columns, stairs

Other information may be requested to determine compliance with the Design Standards.

## Review and Approval

Within 10 days, the reviewer will approve, deny, or approve with binding modifications.

- If your application is approved and all other zoning regulations are met, zoning clearance will be given and your application will be forwarded to the Building Inspections Division for review.
- If approved with binding modifications, the required modifications will be presented to you in writing. You will have the option of accepting or rejecting the modifications. You can signify acceptance of the modifications in writing and with amended plans at the discretion of the zoning administrator.
- If the application is denied, the denial will state the reasons for denial. A denial may be appealed to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

The plan reviewer can also suggest nonbinding modifications to improve design of the development.

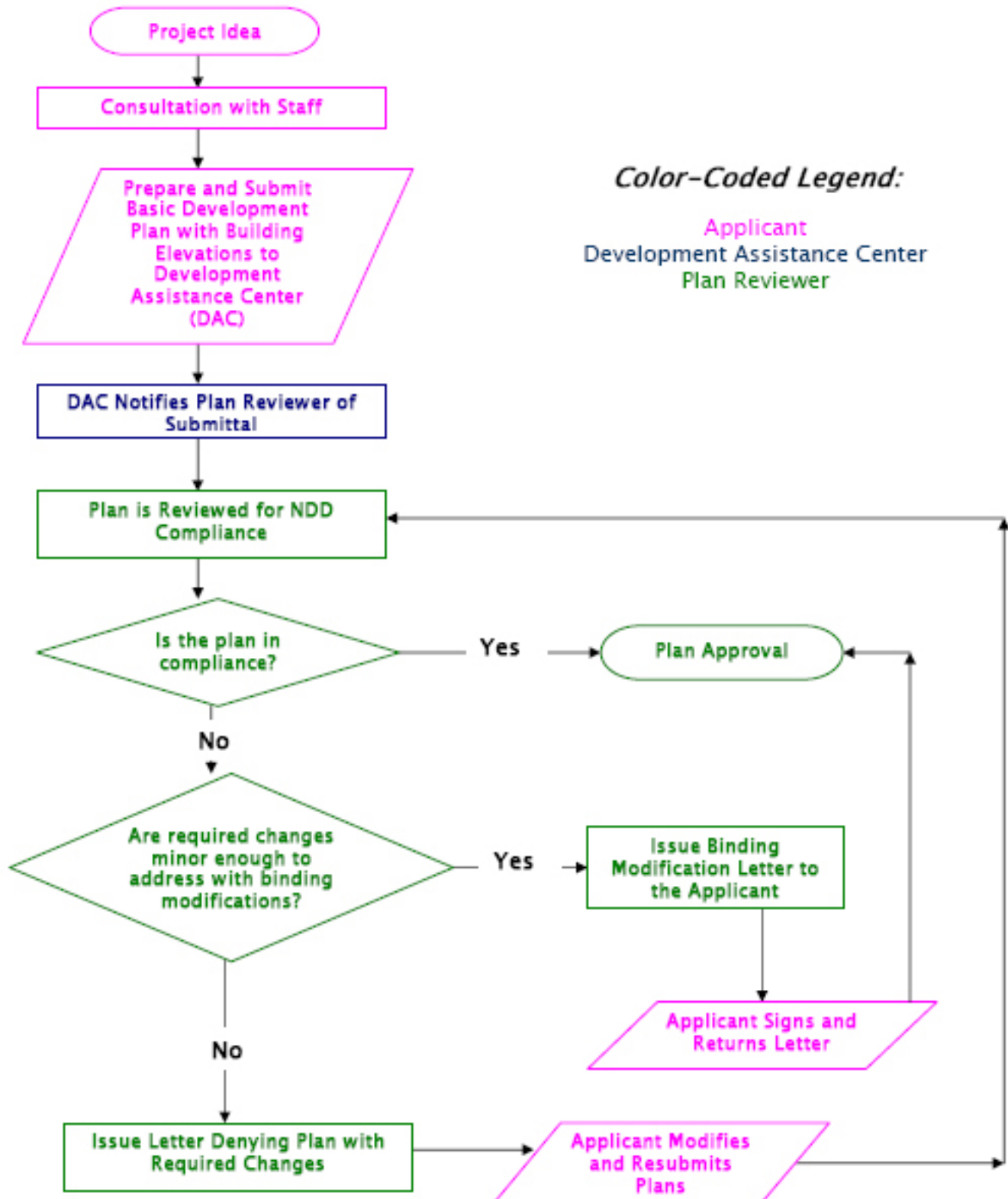




# TYPICAL NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN PROCESS

City of Roanoke

Department of Planning Building and Economic Development



# Design Standards

(excerpt from Zoning Ordinance)

## Sec. 36.2-332(c). Design Standards.

In considering an application for a zoning permit, the Zoning Administrator shall apply the following standards to the construction of, an addition to, or the exterior modification of a dwelling in a designated ND Overlay District:

### (1) Building location and massing

- (A) The required front yard shall be determined by section 36.2-205(f)(2).
- (B) A new dwelling shall have two (2) stories above the grade of the front yard where lots on both sides have two-story dwellings.
- (C) The width of single- and two-family dwellings shall be within twenty (20) percent of the average of the widths of other single- and two-family dwellings on the same side of the same block. The front of multifamily dwellings shall be broken into sections of thirty (30) feet or less in width through offsets of the vertical plane of the facade of at least twelve (12) inches.
- (D) Where lots on both sides have dwellings, the height of the foundation facing the street shall be no more than twenty (20) percent greater than the height of the tallest adjoining foundation and shall be no less than twenty (20) percent below the height of the shortest adjoining foundation.

### (2) Roofs.

- (A) The rise-to-run ratio for the dwelling's main roof shall be 6:12 or steeper.
- (B) The roof of a new dwelling shall have a minimum of three surfaces, except where the gable end faces the street and a porch extends the full width of the dwelling, in which case the roof may have a two-surface configuration.
- (C) Eave and gable overhangs for all dwellings and additions to dwellings shall be at least twelve (12) inches. However, an addition to an existing dwelling shall not be required to have overhangs wider than those of the existing dwelling.
- (D) The rise-to-run ratio of roofs covering porches or entrances shall be equal to or shallower than the main roof.
- (E) Above-grade entrances on a building facade facing a required front yard shall be covered with a roof with a minimum width and depth of thirty-six (36) inches.

### (3) Entrances and windows.

- (A) The dwelling shall have at least one (1) entrance facing the primary front yard. The number of doors facing the primary front yard shall be limited to one (1) door for every eighteen (18) feet of dwelling width. Single- and two-family dwellings may have two entrances facing the primary front yard regardless of dwelling width if the second entrance is recessed at least six (6) feet behind the main front entrance.

- (B) Doors facing a street shall have panel insets or windows.
- (C) At least fifteen (15) percent of the front of the dwelling shall consist of window or door openings. At least ten (10) percent of the side of a dwelling which is not the front of the dwelling and which faces a street shall consist of window or door openings. Roofs, gables, and foundations shall not be included in determining the area of the front or the side of the dwelling.
- (D) Windows on the front facade shall have a height that is at least one and one-half (1 1/2) times their width.
- (E) Windows on the front of the dwelling shall be arranged in a manner that is compatible with that of other dwellings in the district. In general, windows on separate stories of the front should be vertically aligned and windows on the same story should be horizontally aligned.
- (F) All stairs facing a required front yard shall have solid risers.
- (G) A sidewalk at least four (4) feet in width shall be provided between the front porch of a new dwelling and the street. The sidewalk shall be constructed of an impervious material customarily used for sidewalks in the district.

#### **(4) Siding and trim.**

- (A) The siding of any dwelling, exclusive of trim materials, shall not be oriented vertically.

- (B) Windows and doors shall be surrounded by trim which is at least three and one-half (3 1/2) inches wide, except for dwellings with masonry veneer, in which case no trim around doors or windows is required. However, an addition to or modification of an existing dwelling shall not be required to have window and door trim that is wider than that of the existing dwelling.
- (C) Vertical corner boards at least three and one-half (3 1/2) inches wide shall be provided on all dwelling corners, except where the dwelling has a masonry veneer.
- (D) Any exterior wooden elements on a dwelling's facade facing a required front yard shall be painted or be stained with an opaque stain.

#### **(5) Porches.**

- (A) Single- and two-family dwellings shall have a front porch at least one-half (1/2) the width of the dwelling's facade, and having a depth of at least six (6) feet. The front porch shall face the primary front yard.
- (B) For new and existing dwellings, the front porch shall not be enclosed with siding.
- (C) Front porch railings shall have a top and bottom rail. Baluster ends shall not be exposed.
- (D) Front porch columns shall be uniform in shape and style and at least five (5) inches wide at their bottom and top. Front porch columns shall have a base and cap that are at least one (1) inch thick and are at least 120 percent of the width of the column.



(E) The underside of front porches and stairways between pier supports shall be enclosed.

**(6) Additions and accessory structures.**

(A) An attached garage or carport shall be offset at least twenty-four (24) inches behind the front facade of the dwelling. The bay door of an attached garage shall not face the primary front yard.

(B) An addition to an existing dwelling shall be located on the rear or side of the dwelling, except a porch may be added to the front of the dwelling. An addition to the side of a dwelling shall be set back from the dwelling's front face by twenty-four (24) inches or more.

**36.2-654(d)(3) Location Standards for parking**

In the Neighborhood Design Overlay District (ND), off-street parking, if provided, shall be located beyond the building line. In the case of a corner lot, this regulation shall apply only to the building line established by the primary building facade.







## Neighborhood Design District Development Checklist

	Code Requirement per Applicable Section	Site/Building Plan	Inspected As-Built
<b>Building Location and Massing</b> (determined during pre-development meeting with staff)			
Front yard depth per Sec. 36.2-205(F)(2) and yard encroachments per Sec. 36.2-205(e).			
Number of stories per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(1)(B).			
Width of structure per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(1)(C).			
Foundation height per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(1)(D).			
<b>Roofs</b>			
Primary roof pitch per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(2)(A).			
Roof configuration per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(2)(B).			
Eave and gable overhangs per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(2)(C).			
Porch roof pitch per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(2)(D).			
Secondary entrance roof per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(2)(E).			
<b>Entrances and Windows</b>			
Number of entrances per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(3)(A).			
Door composition per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(3)(B).			
Window coverage (front/side facade) per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(3)(C).			
Window height to width ratio per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(3)(D).			

	Code Requirement per Applicable Section	Site/Building Plan	Inspected As-Built
Window arrangement per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(3)(E).			
Stairs facing a front yard per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(3)(F).			
Sidewalk per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(3)(G).			
<b>Siding and Trim</b>			
Siding orientation per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(4)(A).			
Window and door trim per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(4)(B).			
Corner boards per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(4)(C).			
Treatment of exterior wooden elements per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(4)(D).			
<b>Porches</b>			
Porch length and width per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(5)(A).			
Porch enclosure per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(5)(B).			
Porch railings per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(5)(C).			
Porch columns per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(5)(D).			
Porch and stair undersides per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(5)(E).			
<b>Additions</b>			
Attached garage/carport per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(6)(A).			
Addition per Sec. 36.2-332(c)(6)(B).			
<b>Parking</b>			
Driveway location per Sec. 36.2-654(d)(3).			